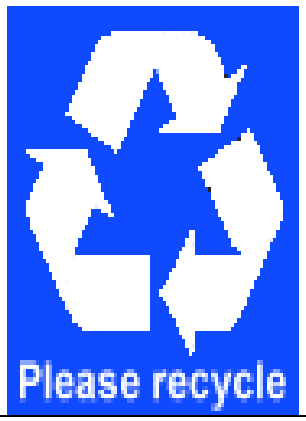

Recycling Lines

Electronic Newsletter **May 2010**

Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, Division of Environmental Enhancement
P.O. Box 1105, Richmond, Virginia 23218 (804) 698-4029 Fax (804) 698-4224.

DEQ's Community Involvement Initiative: The Department of Environmental Quality is dedicated to helping the public better understand DEQ's role in protecting the environment, and to involving the public more effectively in environmental decision making.

Welcome *to Recycling Lines. If you have suggestions on future topics for the newsletter, please send the information to Steve Coe at* steve.coe@deq.virginia.gov.

Composting Units Will Produce Rich Soil for Garden *(University of Richmond Green Program)*

All students need to do now to aid campus sustainability initiatives is save their food waste. URot, a project of GreenUR, is the first student-run composting initiative at the university. Students from GreenUR and Backyard Farmer, a local business, constructed 10 composting units and one compost ingredient holding unit next to the 1900 block of the University Forest Apartments last Sunday.

The units will be operated by students and assisted by Backyard Farmer during the next year, with the goal to produce rich soil for the on-campus community garden, junior Michael Rogers said. Composting is a process that turns biodegradable materials into vitamin-rich soil for gardening and agriculture. Senior Carly Vendegna, co-president of GreenUR, said she envisioned students living in the apartments saving certain types of food waste in biodegradable bags, which would then be regularly deposited in the composting holding unit. Acceptable food waste includes coffee grounds, tea bags, egg shells and vegetables; meat, bones and oil will not be allowed because they do not decompose as easily.

The installation of the composting bins is the culmination of months of collaboration between GreenUR, Backyard Farmer, the Earth Lodge program and University Facilities, which cleared the land needed for the composting units, Rogers said. Beginning in September 2009, students discussed the possibility of pursuing a composting project because it logically followed the implementation of recycling programs on campus. The apartments were chosen as a location for the composting units because students in the apartments would produce more food waste.

Trey McDonald, campus sustainability coordinator, said the compost initiative idea came from Rogers, who contacted Backyard Farmer, a Greater Richmond-area company, for assistance. Backyard Farmer designs, builds and maintains gardens and educates people so that they are able to grow their own food. Last fall, it hosted a compost education event at The Forum, at which time GreenUR collected more than 120 signatures of students, staff and faculty in support of the compost project. The company will also host workshops for students during the next year so that they may learn how to compost on their own.

Rogers said he hoped the project would educate

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Did You Know?

- According to *Resource Recycling*, 4.45 billion pounds of plastics was exported from the US in 2009.
- As reported by the American Forest & Paper Association, of the 78.9 tons of paper and paperboard consumed in the US in 2009, a record high of 63.4 percent of that material was recovered for recycling.

students about the benefits of composting and help more people understand that composting can help start a garden. Composting is also a valuable life skill that should be learned by college students, many of whom will be living on their own soon, Vendegna said.

"I think the real success of this program may not be measured by how many people start composting their food," Rogers said. "While I do want everyone to participate in composting and gardening, I think that true success will be when students, faculty, staff and people from the surrounding neighborhoods are all working together to create new ways to apply sustainable ideals to their daily lives."

Freshman Ana Neferu said composting was similar to recycling, but with organic materials. "Composting is important because people throw away stuff all the time, so why not get something out of it?" she said. The composting process requires a diversity of products and the correct proportions to succeed. Tim Adkins of Backyard Farmer said each compost bin would contain 60 percent dry, carbon products, such as hay, sawdust, wood chips, paper and leaves; 30 percent wet, nitrogen products, such as food waste, vegetables, coffee grounds and grass clippings; and 10 percent soil. The alternating layers of carbon and nitrogen will absorb gases that produce odors, Rogers said.

Once the soil is produced, it will be used in on-campus gardens. Faculty and staff currently operate 24 garden plots, and a similar one will be available to students beginning April 16, 2010. McDonald said students would be needed to oversee the garden during the summer months.

Alluding to small gardening beds he had seen appear on campus, Sean Sheppard of Backyard Farmer said the ultimate goal of the project would be to spread small-scale awareness. But Rogers said he hoped students would gain more than just knowledge from the project — he wants students to embrace the project and forge relationships with one another.

"Sustainable living takes creativity because it's counter to the dominant way of living," Rogers said. "I truly believe

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that we have the capacity for this sort of creativity, but we first need places to congregate that foster creative thought — I think this composting system may be that place. This whole program started with one conversation, and I'm excited to see how far the next one will take us."

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Plastic Bag Recycling

According to the American Chemistry Council, Americans recycled 832,394,000 pounds of post-consumer bags and packaging wrap in 2008, a 28% increase since 2005. The increase was credited to greater access to collection programs, mostly at retail and grocery stores, and by new markets for the material.

The increase is also a result of industry goals for more recycled content in new bags. The Progressive Bag Affiliates announced a goal of 40% recycled content in all plastic shopping bags made by member companies by 2015.

Recovered plastic from bags and films can be used to make product such as decking, fencing, railings, crating, shopping carts, and new plastic bags. In the case of the Isle of Wight plastic bag recovery and recycling project, the plastic bag material is destined for plastic lumber manufacturing by TREX in Winchester, Virginia.

Keep Virginia Beautiful

The Keep Virginia Beautiful Board of Directors selected Michael Baum to serve as the organization's new Executive Director. Michael brings a strong background in non-profit development through past roles with the Virginia Special Olympics and Connor's Heroes.

Michael started work on March 1. He may be contacted at 804-337-9696 or via email at mbaum@keepvirginiabeautiful.org.

For information on the new Keep Virginia Beautiful, please visit the KVB website at www.keepvirginiabeautiful.org

Call2Recycle News

Thanks to recycling through major national retailers, municipalities and communities, Call2Recycle reports that it collected 6.1 million pounds of rechargeable batteries in 2009. Visit www.call2recycle.org for more information.

Calendar of Events

May 18-19: **Virginia Recycling Association**'s annual conference and trade show. Virginia Beach.

Mid-Atlantic Region Gets First Certified R2 Electronics Recycler

Through a brand new electronics recycling certification program, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is taking steps to ensure that electronics recyclers adhere to highly protective standards for workers and the environment in processing pre-owned electronics. This new certification process also means that recycled materials will not be shipped overseas without the consent of the designated country.

The protocols required of certified Responsible Recyclers (R2) help to reduce energy and natural resource consumption, greenhouse gases and hazardous waste. Recyclers are not permitted to burn or landfill certain materials. If electronics are going to be sold for reuse, the recycler must show that all personal data has been cleared or destroyed, that the equipment has been tested and is in working condition, and that the equipment is packaged properly. A recycler must exercise due diligence to ensure appropriate management of the materials throughout the recycling chain, whether domestic or international.

Only three companies nationwide have received this new designation – called Responsible Recycling Practices Certification. The first, and only certified recycler in the mid-Atlantic region is E-structors, Inc. of Elkridge, Md. For more information contact E-structors at 410-379-3098, via email at info@e-shred.com, or by visiting their website at www.e-shred.com.

Ocean City, Maryland, trades recycling for incineration

Ocean City, a popular seaside tourist destination in Maryland, recently announced that it will halt its curbside recycling program and, instead, will incinerate the materials. Budget considerations led the town to reevaluate its recycling program.

The town's Public Works director announced the move to the Town Council in mid-April. The recyclables will no longer be required to be separated from the rest of the waste stream. Waste from Ocean City will now be shipped to a Covanta Energy plant in Chester, Pennsylvania where it will be burned as fuel for electricity generators. It is projected that the move will save the coastal town upwards of $1 million annually.

According to a news report, town officials explained that the recycling program is costing the town $394 per ton over the $162 per ton fee for trash. Although $250,000 in revenue was realized from the sale of the recyclables annually, this was not enough to offset the cost of diverting the material.

PET Bottles Environmental Impact Studied

PET plastic bottles have less impact on the environment over their lifecycle than aluminum cans or glass bottles, according to a study commissioned by the PET Resin Association. The study, conducted by Franklin Associates, compared total energy, solid waste and greenhouse gas emissions per 100,000 ounces of soft drinks packaged in typical 20-ounce PET bottles, 8-ounce glass bottles or 12-ounce aluminum cans. Visit www.petresin.org/news.asp